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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 005409

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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA/CCA AND WHA/CAR-SEARBY;
NSC FOR FISK

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SUBJECT: CUBA: REVIEW OF LIBERTAD ACT TITLE III SUSPENSION
- DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

REF: A. STATE 207359

B. SANTO DOMINGO 3161

1. (SBU) Summary: This cable responds to Ref A tasking and updates the information provided in our last report six months ago (Ref B). President Fernandez in the second year of his administration has made no significant change in his low-profile approach to Cuban issues. As in previous years, the Dominican Republic joined the UNGA majority in voting for a resolution criticizing the U.S. embargo. Interaction is limited to educational, sports, and technical exchanges, visits to Cuba by Dominican tourists, and residence in Cuba by a few church-affiliated social workers. A senior Dominican official, Higher Education Secretary Ligia Amado de Cardona, visited Cuba several months ago to attend the annual graduation of approximately 50 Dominican medical students, part of an ongoing program. Embassy considers that U.S. national interests and Dominican Government actions justify continued renewal of the waiver of Title III of the Libertad Act with regard to Dominican businesses.

Dominican Businesses and Cuba

2. (SBU) As in our last report (Ref B), Embassy considers that U.S. national interests and the actions of the Dominican Government justify a renewal of the waiver of Title III of the Libertad Act with regard to Dominican businesses that may be involved in joint ventures with the Government of Cuba or significant trade with Cuba. A further Embassy inquiry to MFA Director of the Americas Francia Sencion has not resulted in identification of any Dominican companies or entities with investments or joint ventures that would trigger Title III concerns. There continues to be little Dominican investment in Cuba, and Embassy has no information about any conflict between Dominican investors and U.S. citizens with property claims in Cuba. Embassy has not received any complaints by any U.S. citizens against any Dominican company related to any investment in Cuba or Dominican Republic-Cuba trade.

Dominican Vote at the UNGA

3. (U) The only international organization vote on Cuba in the past six months, to Embassy's knowledge, approved the annual UNGA resolution criticizing the U.S. embargo on economic exchanges with Cuba. The Dominican Republic joined the large majority voting against the United States position.
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Cuban-Dominican Technical Cooperation and Exchanges

4. (SBU) The administration of President Fernandez, now in its second year, has continued to take a low profile on Cuban issues. Technical cooperation is arranged between the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency in the Dominican Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Investment in Cuba. An official of the Technical Secretariat has informed us that currently, approximately 44 Cuban sports trainers are in this country helping to train Dominican sports coaches, and about 18 Dominican technicians in physical education are in Cuba performing similar functions. In October and November, the Dominican Ministry of Education sponsored a visit by a Cuban expert on adult literacy training, who trained Dominican teachers in a program to improve literacy among low-income residents, starting in the big capital city barrio of Capotillo. A Cuban psychology professor resident here and teaching at a Dominican university showed political officer some of the printed training materials, which appeared to be technically well done but with an obvious political slant. The professor said the literacy trainer had returned to Cuba in November, but was expected to return in January to continue the project.

5. (SBU) According to the MFA, the number of Dominican students studying medicine in Cuba continues at about 200-250 at any time. The annual graduation of about 50 Dominican medical students was attended this year by Dominican

Secretary of Higher Education Dra. Ligia Amado de Cardona;

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last year we understand the same event was attended by the MFA Americas director. (For further details on the program, see Ref B para 5.)

16. (SBU) Cuban authorities completed the transfer of the first Dominican prisoner to the Dominican Republic under a 2002 prisoner-exchange accord, and arrangements are being made for the transfer of two other Dominicans now in custody in Cuba. MFA Under Secretary for Consular Affairs Rosario Graciano told us that the cases involved immigration law violations and/or alien smuggling.

17. (SBU) According to the Technical Secretariat, the Dominican agency (INESPRE) that provides subsidized food to low-income persons has agreed to provide technical assistance to Cuba on this subject, to begin early in 2006. Two other Dominican Government entities -- the Dominican Petroleum Refinery (REFIDOMSA) and the Dominican Telecommunications Institute (INDOTEL) are drafting accords with Cuban counterparts for technical exchanges, but these have not been finalized.

18. (SBU) The annual meeting of the Cuban-Dominican Mixed Commission, which had been tentatively scheduled for September (Ref B para 8), was postponed because the principals (Technical Secretary of the Presidency Temistocles Montas and the Cuban Minister of Foreign Investment), were traveling elsewhere. The Dominican Technical Secretariat has proposed a new date in January and is awaiting a Cuban response.
HERTELL